



# Teens and At-Risk Behaviors

Despite your best parenting efforts, unfortunately, sometimes teens engage in risky behaviors. This guide provides tips on helping your child make smart choices, recognizing warning signs of at-risk behaviors, and knowing when to seek help. *Note*—The information in this guide is not intended to provide you with specific advice or recommendations. Always consult your doctor or other appropriate professional with any questions or concerns you may have.

## Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use in Teens

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco is so much a presence in society today that parents cannot ignore it. Fortunately, most schools now offer drug prevention programs at a young age; however, given the dangers parents must have their own effective ways to teach their children about drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

### Alcohol

Parents should be firm about the rule that underage drinking is forbidden. Not only can it be dangerous, it is against the law. Newspapers constantly report tragic stories about teenagers being injured or killed due to alcohol use. Don't nag your teen but point out the realities and the potential dangers of drinking.

Alcohol use among teenagers is more common than parents may suspect. The signs of alcohol abuse are easy to spot—drunken behavior, sleeping long hours after a party, hangovers, etc.—but more moderate use is often difficult to detect. Keeping a close eye on the liquor cabinet is one observation tool; another is being familiar with your child's friends and activities.

### Did you know...?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the average age when first trying alcohol is 11 years old for boys, and 13 years old for girls. 43 percent of teenagers who start drinking before age 15 are (four times) as likely to become dependent on alcohol as those who delay starting until they are the legal age, 21.

Plus, consider the following tips:

- **Be a role model.** If you don't want your child to abuse alcohol, watch your own actions. Be aware of how much you drink in front of your child and drink responsibly.
- **Relay stories about the consequences of excessive drinking.** Teens tend to underestimate the impact of alcohol and they need constant reminders that alcohol is a powerful drug, not something to be taken lightly. Relay stories about drunk driving accidents, date rape or other incidents that involved alcohol use.
- **If you have alcohol in your home, strictly forbid it from your teens.** Some parents put alcohol under lock and key; at the very least, tuck the bottles away someplace unknown to your child, especially if you are going to be away. Even if your child would not partake, he or she might feel pressured to allow friends to drink.
- **Let your child know that you're there to help.** Your teen will probably be reluctant to admit to you that he or she has been somewhere where drinking has been involved—or that he or she has

been drinking. This can be tricky for parents to handle, but make sure your child knows that safety is a priority above all else. Agree ahead of time that if your child needs a ride home, or needs you to come pick him or her up, you won't comment or lecture about the drinking. Later, when the danger is past, have a quiet discussion with your child to review what happened, what the consequences could have been, and emphasize the purpose and validity of your rules.

- **Teach your child proper social skills.** One of the leading reasons teens drink is to make social situations easier to handle. Teens who are comfortable with groups are less likely to feel the pressure to drink. Practice social skills with your teen such as general manners, ways to introduce oneself and effective conversation openers.

## Tobacco

The hazards of tobacco and cigarette smoking are well-known; cigarette use has a negative impact on virtually every aspect of physical health. But few teens fully realize the serious implications; the effects of smoking are too far in the future for them to take it seriously. Some of the following approaches may prove more useful than a discussion about smoking and health:

- **Point out the unattractive features;** it yellows the teeth, smells awful and causes bad breath. Teens are very concerned with their physical appeal to others, and they may think twice about doing something that might take away from it.
- **Remind your teen that regular smoking is expensive.** Figure out with your teen what he or she could buy with the amount of money a smoker spends on cigarettes in one year.
- **Stress that smoking is addictive;** by not starting now, they will do themselves a favor for life.

- **Talk about how you—or a friend—became addicted and how hard it was to quit.** Teens virtually always think they will never become addicted; hearing another's story of addiction, and the misery of quitting, might help them face reality.
- **Remind them again and again that tobacco use is one of the leading causes of cancer** and that people die from smoking cigarettes, pipes and cigars, as well as chewing tobacco.

Additionally, practice what you preach. If you smoke, now is a perfect time to quit. Show your teen that you are aware of the dangers and that you are willing to quit for them—and for your own health. Speak to your doctor about the best ways to quit smoking and contact support groups and resources that can help make it easier.

## Drugs

All drugs can have a powerful effect on the brain, which researchers believe may have long-lasting, negative implications. As a parent, it is important to be knowledgeable about drugs—and to help your children understand the negative effects. The following tips may help.

- **Do Your Homework.** Children today are experimenting with many different types of drugs—including marijuana, stimulants, cocaine/crack, narcotics, hallucinogens, depressants, and inhalants. Familiarize yourself with the different types of drugs including appearance, how they are taken (inhaled, ingested, injected, etc.), what the effects are, and how to recognize potential use. There is a wealth of free information available on the Internet or at the library—and much of the information is written directly for teens and their parents. Consider visiting some of these sites or researching information together as a way of leading into discussions about potential consequences of drugs. It will also show your teen that you are aware of—and concerned about—drug use among teens.

- **Discuss drugs factually.** By avoiding a judgmental tone or attitude, you can open the door to a real discussion with your child, one that invites an exchange of information and ideas. Knowing you are available to offer advice and to share confidences and concerns may keep your teen from developing secretive patterns that could ultimately become destructive.
- **Stress that many drugs are addictive;** even if your teen tries them once, he or she may not be able to stop.
- **Emphasize that drugs are illegal.** By doing drugs, your child can get arrested and may go to jail.
- **Remind your teen that drugs can kill.** Tell your child matter-of-factly that each day teens die as the result of experimenting with or overdosing on drugs.
- **Help your child say “no.”** Teens need to know how to say no in ways that are comfortable for them. Give them specific phrases to use, such as: “No thanks, I’m not interested in frying my brain.” Others may prefer a less dramatic answer, something as simple as, “I don’t want any.” Whatever your child’s preferences, you should role-play the answers as if you were in a real conversation. That way when the time comes, your teen will be well-practiced in refusing.
- Interest in the drug culture including drug-oriented magazines, slogans and jokes, plus a refusal to discuss drug-related topics with you.
- Physical deterioration such as memory lapses, weight loss, poor grooming, bloodshot eyes, a runny nose or lethargy.
- Downward slide in school performance, grades and attendance; lack of motivation to do well.
- Behavior changes such as chronic lying, stealing, changing friends, secretiveness, mood swings and loss of interest in what was previously enjoyable.

Always make it clear to your child that you are willing to help should he or she become involved in drug use of any form, including cigarettes. You can find information about substance abuse programs for adolescents through your local hospital, your child’s doctor or your child’s school. Additionally, the “Helpful Resources” section at the end of this guide provides information on organizations that can help you and your child deal with drug and alcohol abuse issues.

### Sexual Behavior and Teens

Beliefs and values concerning sex vary from parent to parent, but regardless of your beliefs about teenagers and sex, most experts agree that it is important to educate teens about the risks and realities of it. Research shows that today at least half of all teenagers have become sexually active by the time they graduate from high school. However, these same studies also show that most of the teens who are having sex are selective; they do not believe in promiscuity, but they feel sexual activity with a “steady” is normal and healthy.

In order for you to give your child a strong sense of values concerning sex, start discussing the subject early, even before your child becomes a teenager. Children are more willing to listen to discussions about sex before their hormones have started surging, at which time it becomes extremely embarrassing for them.

### Danger Signs of Drug Abuse

If you suspect that your child is using drugs, address the situation immediately. Be direct with your child about your suspicions and the reasons behind them. Don’t be surprised if your child denies drug use, but don’t back down. The sooner you obtain professional help for your child, the better your chances of helping your child. Be alert for the following signs of drug abuse:

- Evidence of drug paraphernalia or odors of drugs.

But it's not just values about sex you should be explaining. Teens have many mistaken ideas concerning sex. While your child's school probably offers sex education courses, don't assume that these courses will provide your child with all the information he or she needs. You may find talking about sex is hard for you, but try to bring up the subject in a casual manner with some regularity. This will allow your child to absorb information over time and form questions he or she may have about sex.

A good opportunity to mention the subject is in response to what you see on the news or a television show. Ask your child if he or she understands the references, and what he or she thinks about them. This may open a conversation more easily, and gives you the opportunity to address questions, or areas where you suspect he or she needs more information. It also presents you with many chances to teach your attitudes and beliefs about sex.

Parents should also discuss the issues of pregnancy and the proper and consistent use of birth control. Additionally, given the impact of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, it is vital—even life-saving—that teens understand why protecting themselves is necessary, whether by practicing abstinence or through the proper protection. You might even say, for example, "I don't agree with premarital sex, but if you do decide to have sex, I want you to be safe." If you are uncomfortable discussing these issues with your teen, encourage him or her to talk to a doctor about any questions he or she may have.

### Teenage Pregnancy

Unfortunately, even with information and the availability of birth control, teens continue to get pregnant year after year. In fact, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, approximately one-third of girls become pregnant at least once before age 20. This figure highlights how important it is to speak to your teen about pregnancy. If you do not

feel comfortable speaking to your teen about these issues yourself, ask your child's doctor to have a conversation with him or her about the consequences and risks of sexual activity. Both boys and girls need to understand that sexual activity, sometimes even with birth control, can result in pregnancy—and if they are sexually active, they must be responsible enough to understand and accept that. If your teen gets pregnant—or your son gets a girl pregnant—be supportive and make sure the couple seeks medical attention and counseling as soon as possible.

Additionally, consider these parenting tips to help teens avoid pregnancy:

- **Be clear about your own sexual attitudes and values.** Clarifying how you feel about sex, love and relationships may help your teen form his or her ideas. You may want to think about the following questions before speaking to your teen:
  - Were you sexually active as a teenager and how do you feel about that now?
  - Were you sexually active before marriage?
  - What do such reflections lead you to say to your teen about these issues?
- **Be available to discuss with your teen what he or she really wants to know.** The following are common questions that teens have about sex:
  - How will I know if I'm in love?
  - Will sex bring me closer to my girlfriend/boyfriend?
  - How do I manage pressure from my girlfriend/boyfriend to have sex?
  - Can you get pregnant the first time?
  - How will I know when I'm ready to have sex?



- **Don't be shy about giving your point of view.** For example, you may wish to say, "I think teens in high school are too young to have sex, especially given today's risks."
- **Know what your teen is doing and whom he or she spends time with.** Set limits, and establish rules, curfews and standards of expected behavior, preferably through an open process of discussion.
- **Keep your teen busy with useful activities.** Know what your child is doing, and/or have someone responsible for making certain that your teen is safe during those hours that you are not there to supervise.
- **Encourage your child to value education.** Helping your teen have options for a bright future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood may significantly reduce the likelihood that your teen would risk becoming pregnant.

### Acquaintance Rape

As your teen becomes more sexually aware, sexual situations can cause a great amount of stress and confusion. Because of the conflicting feelings that many teens have about sex, they are vulnerable to acquaintance rape—also known as date rape. Acquaintance rape occurs when someone a person knows (e.g., a friend, boyfriend, relative, etc.) forces or coerces him or her to have sexual intercourse. While you should remind your teen that he or she always has the right to say "no," you should also help your teen recognize when he or she is in danger of being raped. A conversation about the wrong reasons to say yes—to please someone else, to feel accepted, to solidify a relationship, for example—may help clarify your child's thinking.

It is equally important for boys to understand that when a girl says no, she means no. Boys need to understand that forcing a female to have sex without her consent is not only

immoral, it is a crime. Your daughters, too, should understand fully that this is a criminal act, as is any form of assault. For more information on acquaintance rape, please seek information from the organizations in the "Helpful Resources" section at the end of this guide.

### Eating Disorders in Teens

Teenagers, particularly girls, are often overly focused on their bodies. They may spend hours obsessing over what they perceive as fat thighs or a too-big tummy. The result can be excessive dieting and, in the worst cases, eating disorders. The desire to maintain a normal weight is healthy, and a goal parents should encourage. However, teenagers' weights often fluctuate until they have reached their full height and mature body, something neither you nor your child should expect until sometime in the middle to late teen years. Consequently, it is important not to become overly focused on your child's weight, whether over- or underweight. However, if your child begins to show signs of an eating disorder, as described here, you will need to take appropriate action.

### Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder in which a person starves him or herself, typically appears in early to mid-adolescence. According to the National Eating Disorders Association, between one-half and one percent of American women suffer from anorexia nervosa. Though boys can also suffer from anorexia, it is far less common.

Many teens, particularly teenage girls, diet or practice unusual eating habits, and typically it is nothing to be alarmed about. However, if the behavior persists, or if you recognize any of the following symptoms of anorexia nervosa, speak to your teen and his or her doctor:

- Extreme weight loss
- Restricted food intake

- Absence of at least three periods (amenorrhea) in girls
- Constant irrational fear of getting fat

If left untreated, a teen who is suffering from anorexia may experience serious physical consequences and, in extreme cases, it may even result in death. According to the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH), medical complications due to the constant state of semi-starvation in anorexics may include:

- Damage to vital organs such as the heart and brain
- Drops in pulse and blood pressure rates
- Slowed thyroid functioning
- Brittle nails and hair
- Dry, yellowed skin which may become covered with soft hair called lanugo
- Excessive thirst and frequent urination
- Lowered body temperature and inability to withstand cold (caused by reduced body fat)
- Mild anemia
- Swollen joints
- Decrease in bone minerality (loss of calcium), making bones brittle and prone to breakage
- Shrinkage of the brain, which may cause personality changes
- Irregular heart rhythm and, in the most severe cases, heart failure

If you suspect that your teen has anorexia, seek medical help immediately—early treatment is crucial. No matter how well meaning, parents do not have the skills or training to handle this highly complex problem. Anorexia will not get better without medical intervention, and the potential consequences are too great to be ignored.

## Bulimia

Another eating disorder, with often serious consequences, is bulimia. Both boys and girls can become bulimic, but it is more common in girls. Those with bulimia may occasionally starve themselves as do anorexics, but much more typically, they binge and then purge shortly after ingesting the food by vomiting, using laxatives or both. In fact, in spite of chronic binge eating—sometimes enormous amounts of food—bulimics generally manage to keep their weight within 10 pounds of normal. Not surprisingly, the continuous purging can eventually cause erosion of tooth enamel, lesions on the esophagus, digestive problems, and chemical and hormonal imbalances. Those with bulimia, who tend to have outgoing, social personalities, often exercise excessively as well.

People who have bulimia are usually very embarrassed about it and will go to great lengths to hide it from others. This can make it difficult to recognize the symptoms, but parents should be aware of the following signs:

- Large amounts of food disappearing from the kitchen on a regular basis.
- Disappearing into the bathroom regularly and for prolonged periods of time. Some people with bulimia can't bear to wait more than a few minutes after eating even a modest meal to rid themselves of the food.
- A pattern of weight gains (up to 10 pounds in a month) that drop off quickly and seemingly effortlessly.

If you suspect your child is bulimic, talk to him or her about your concerns, but remember, he or she may not admit there is a problem. Seek medical help immediately if you have reason to suspect bulimia. Ask your child's doctor or contact your local hospital for a referral to an eating disorder specialist. For more information about eating disorders and where to find help, please refer to the "Helpful Resources" section at the end of this guide.

## Overeating

Though not as extreme or severe as anorexia or bulimia, overeating can also be a problem for some teens. Though some children are overweight because they simply eat too much or don't exercise enough, in some cases, overeating can be a way of self-soothing, or dealing with the stress of being a teenager. This is a difficult situation for parents to address: Too much attention on weight can easily make a teen self-conscious, and can lead to overeating as a way of rebelling or comforting him or herself. Instead, try the following suggestions.

- **Set up an appointment with your child's doctor.** A discussion with the doctor about weight may make it easier for a teen to accept the information; if it comes from a parent, a child is more apt to be emotional and confrontational.
- **Avoid criticizing or commenting about your child's eating habits.** This can help keep food from turning into a hypersensitive issue in the household.
- **Stock your kitchen with healthy, low-fat foods** such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats; avoid junk food.
- **Don't offer food as a reward or as a way to soothe feelings.** Many people spend a lifetime trying to unlearn the habit of using food to reward themselves or comfort emotions; you can help your child avoid starting the habit in the first place.
- **Encourage your child to develop interests outside the home such as theater, sports or volunteer projects.** These activities will help your child constructively fill his or her time, and enhance self-esteem.

## Bullying and Teens

Bullying is also considered an at-risk issue. Research shows that bullying can be a sign of other serious antisocial and/or violent behavior. According to *Stop Bullying Now*, HRSA, teens who frequently bully their peers are more likely than others to:

- Get into frequent fights;
- Be injured in a fight;
- Vandalize or steal property;
- Drink alcohol;
- Smoke;
- Be truant from school;
- Drop out of school; and
- Carry a weapon

Teens who bully typically are impulsive, hot headed, and dominant and easily frustrated. They also tend to lack empathy, have difficulty following rules and view violence in a positive way. Additionally, boys who bully tend to be physically stronger than other children.

## What Do You Do If Your Child Is Bullying Others?

Do not ignore the situation. It is imperative that you get involved to protect the best interest of your child—as well as the safety of others. Consider the following tips:

- Make it clear to your child that you do not tolerate bullying.
- Develop clear and consistent rules; praise and reinforce your children for following rules; and use non-physical, non-hostile consequences for rule violations.
- Spend more time with your teen and carefully monitor his/her activities. Find out who your child's friends are and how and where they spend their time.
- Build on your child's talents by encouraging involvement in pro-social activities (clubs, music lessons, non-violent sports).

- Share concerns with your child's teachers, counselor, or principal. Work together to send clear messages to your child that the bullying must stop.

If you need additional help, speak to a mental health professional and refer to the "Helpful Resources" section of this guide for more information and resources that can help.

*Source: Stop Bullying Now, HRSA*

## Gangs and Teens

In some schools, especially in urban areas, teen gangs are commonplace. Gang membership can be extremely attractive to teens for reasons that are surprisingly understandable. Teens going through the difficult process of growing up often long for a sense of belonging. As part of a gang, they are made to feel like a welcome part of the group, and are thus willing to behave in ways to maintain their status that would otherwise be unacceptable. The gang becomes a surrogate family, and the members accept the consequences of gang life as a trade-off for the feeling of belonging. Additionally, some teens welcome being told what to do by gang leaders; the growing number of decisions teens face are reduced this way, and for some teens this is preferable to the responsibility of thinking independently.

If you believe your child is at-risk for being drawn into a gang, or you live in an area where gangs are prevalent, you can help him or her avoid being tempted to join a gang. Consider the following tips:

- **Encourage your child to become involved in extracurricular activities** such as athletics or drama clubs.
- **Establish rules for your child** and be consistent in following them.
- **Make an effort to meet your child's friends**, and get to know both the children and their parents.

- **Avoid buying, and discourage your child from dressing in, gang-related clothing.**
- **Learn about gang activity** in your community.
- **Keep in touch with your child** and know his or her whereabouts at all times.

The following signs may indicate your child is in a gang:

- Bragging or admission of gang involvement
- Wearing one color of clothing or distinctive jewelry regularly
- Listening to gang-influenced music
- Withdrawing from the family and requesting more privacy than usual
- Associating with a different group of friends
- Unusual drawings or language on schoolbooks

If you believe or know for certain that your child is in a gang or that your child is being threatened or harassed by a gang, talk to the school principal or guidance counselor about your concerns and find out what is being done to protect students. You may also consider contacting other parents, or approaching the school board or Parent/Teacher Organization, to bring about effective safety measures. Schools, however, are not responsible for what takes place off of school property. If your child is harassed by a gang, report any threats to your local police.

## Teenage Runaways

It is not uncommon for teens to threaten to run away on occasion. Experts in adolescent behavior explain that the particular threat—to run away—may not be the issue. More likely, it reveals that your child is upset about something. If your child is threatening to run away, pay close attention, explore the real problems behind the threats and take



appropriate action. The following measures may help you ease tensions and keep your child safely at home:

- **Even in the heat of an argument, stop yourself from reacting and ask quietly what is causing your child to be so upset.** Listen carefully to what he or she has to say, without interruptions, arguments or denials.
- **Reassure your child that you love him or her very much,** and that you want to help resolve whatever problem is causing him or her to be upset.
- **Don't dare your child to follow through,** offering to pack his or her bags as you might have jokingly done when he or she threatened to leave as a preschooler. A teenager has the ability to make good on the threat and, if challenged, might do so just to prove the point.
- **If feelings have become too intense in your household, consider having your child stay with a close friend or relative for a few days.** Make it absolutely clear that this is merely a chance to cool off and in no way implies that you love him or her any less or that you want to "get rid" of him or her.
- **Seek help.** If your child is so distressed that he or she wants to leave home, professional counseling is essential to prevent future tragedies. Ask your child's school guidance counselor for a referral to a therapist who specializes in treating adolescents.

### Depression and Suicide in Teens

Everyone experiences sadness from time to time, but depression is a clinical disturbance that leads to feelings of worthlessness and isolation. Left untreated, it can lead to suicide, now the third leading cause of death in the United States among people ages 10 to 24.

### Signs of Depression

Although depression isn't easy to detect, in part because the person typically becomes quiet and withdrawn, you must address any signs of depression you see in your child.

Look for the following symptoms:

- Changes in sleep patterns, either sleeping much more or much less than usual
- Changes in eating patterns, either eating much more (particularly prevalent among girls) or much less
- Expressing feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Substance abuse, either drugs or alcohol
- Withdrawal from friends and family; staying in his or her room alone for long periods or little interest in socializing

Should these symptoms persist for more than a few weeks, or you notice a pattern of depression (lasting several days or more) that lifts and returns on a regular basis over a period of several months, seek professional help. A professional counselor or therapist can help your child learn how to cope with the normal stresses of growing up and, if necessary, arrange for medication to treat any chemical imbalances that might be causing depression.

### Signs of Suicidal Thoughts

It may be difficult to know if your child is having thoughts of suicide, but you can be aware and alert for signs of trouble. Look for the following clues in your child's behavior:

- Previous suicide attempts
- Making threats about dying or killing him or herself
- Giving away personal belongings
- Lack of interest in activities he or she previously enjoyed

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawal from family and friends

If you suspect your child may be thinking about suicide, seek professional help immediately. If you work, ask your employer if they offer benefits that provide emotional counseling to families. There are also suicide hotlines available 24 hours a day. Please refer to the “Helpful Resources” section at the end of this guide for more information.

### **Self-Injury in Teens**

Self-injury, an increasingly common problem among at-risk adolescents, is often a symptom of another problem, such as an eating disorder, low self-esteem, depression and/or alcohol or drug abuse, though the causes and severity of self-injury vary.

Most often, it affects adolescent girls and typically takes the form of cutting, usually on the forearms, though other forms may include carving, scratching, biting, bruising, burning, excessive body piercing, and picking or pulling skin or hair.

Adolescents who have difficulty talking about their feelings may release their emotional tension, physical discomfort, pain and low self-esteem with self-injurious behaviors. Self-injury can be difficult for parents to identify because teens can hide the wounds with clothing, however, if you suspect that your teen may be harming him or herself, seek professional help immediately.

### **Helpful Resources**

If your child is involved in risky behaviors, professional help can be invaluable for parents. There are various forms of therapy to choose from, including support groups or one-on-one counseling. Church, schools and community groups often offer some form of guidance, therapy or workshops for parents of teens. Employers may also offer support in the form of counseling, education or referrals. Additionally the following resources may help.

#### **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)**

3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20016-3007  
202-966-7300  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

This organization helps parents and families understand developmental, behavioral, emotional and mental disorders affecting children and adolescents. The web site offers fact sheets for parents and caregivers and information on child and adolescent psychiatry.

#### **The Bureau for At-Risk Youth**

303 Crossway Park Drive  
Woodbury, NY 11797  
800-99-YOUTH (999-6884)  
[www.at-risk.com](http://www.at-risk.com)

This organization is an educational publisher and distributor of programs, videos, publications and products for at-risk youth and their caregivers. Educational materials address issues such as substance abuse, teenage sexuality and pregnancy, violence prevention, conflict resolution, child abuse, self-esteem and more.

#### **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**

800-729-6686  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

This clearinghouse provides information and materials concerning alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and treatment.

**Boys Town**

14100 Crawford Street  
Boys Town, NE 68010  
800-448-3000  
[www.boystown.org](http://www.boystown.org)

This nonprofit, non-sectarian association is the leader in the treatment and care of at-risk youth, and in the research and development of programs to assist parents in meeting the needs of their children—both boys and girls. This includes residential and emergency services as well as parent training sessions offered throughout the country. A toll-free telephone crisis and referral service is also available for children and parents.

**National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)**

PO Box 7  
Highland Park, IL 60035  
847-831-3438 (Hotline)  
[www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)

This nonprofit organization works to prevent eating disorders and provides a variety of free programs to help victims and families including a hotline, counseling, community support groups, referrals to health care professionals and programs, information packets and newsletters.

**National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy**

1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-478-8500  
[www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

This nonprofit organization provides information and assistance designed to help reduce teen pregnancy and raise awareness throughout the U.S. Visit the web site for statistics, free downloads, an online youth network for teens, and more.

**National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (NYVPRC)**

[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)

The web site contains helpful articles and resources about violence and how to prevent it.

**National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)**

2345 Crystal Drive, 5th Floor  
Arlington, VA 22202  
202-466-6272  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

This private, nonprofit organization's goal is to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. Its Online Resource Center offers information for teens on topics such as date rape, vandalism, conflict management, alcohol and drug abuse, etc. A list of national hotlines is also available.

**National Eating Disorders Association**

603 Stewart Street, Suite 803  
Seattle, WA 98101  
800-931-2237  
(Helpline, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Pacific Time)  
206-382-3587  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

This national nonprofit organization provides free and low-cost information on eating disorders and their prevention to people with eating disorders, their friends and families, health care professionals and educators. It also has a confidential hotline where callers can ask questions about eating disorders and obtain local referrals.

**National Runaway Switchboard**

3080 N. Lincoln Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60657  
800-RUNAWAY (800-786-2929)  
[www.nrscrisisline.org](http://www.nrscrisisline.org)

This free, nonprofit service operates a confidential hotline for runaway youth, teens in crisis, and concerned friends and family members. NRS helps youth dealing with peer pressure, family problems, abuse, suicide, depression, neglect, etc. Free educational materials are available to any individual or youth-serving organization.

**Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)**

200 L Street, NW, Suite 406  
Washington, DC 20036  
800-656-HOPE (800-656-4673)  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

This nonprofit organization operates a national hotline for survivors of sexual assault, which offers free, confidential counseling and support 24 hours a day.

## **Stop Bullying Now**

[www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)

This web site provides tips, games and information for parents, children and educators on how to prevent bullying in our society.

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Mental Health Information Center**

P.O. Box 42557

Washington, DC 20015

800-789-2647

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

This organization provides information about mental health via a toll-free telephone number and web site, including information on how to prevent bullying.

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